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Executive Registry

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*Memo
Chrono*

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Dear Aaron,

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It is remarkable how after over forty years you and I find our minds running on the same track so frequently. I have been thinking about follow-up on the disinformation conference. Leo was down here last week and talked to me about his idea that we need today the modern counterpart of the old Institute for Propaganda Analysis. We talked about how best to develop it. We both agreed that you could make a major contribution. I said I would get in touch with you to get your ideas. Then over the weekend reading a follow-up report on the disinformation conference I found appended to it your letter of 14 February to [redacted] in which you suggest that the purpose of the conference should be to lay the groundwork for a permanent Center for Propaganda Research, paralleling the Institute for Propaganda Analysis of the 1930s.

So, we are all on the same wavelength. Leo has already talked, I believe, to Freedom House about it. He tells me that Leonard Sussman was involved in the Institute for Propaganda Analysis back in the 1930s.

I'd like you to think about and perhaps talk to Leo about how we can proceed from here. I have already talked to Bob Gates about how we can contribute and he has some ideas. Sometime soon we should all get together and figure out what needs to be done.

It is too bad you were not able to make the conference at Airlie House. Your presence there was missed. We taped the proceedings and are working to prepare a conference report that includes synopses of the numerous oral presentations and discussions, as well as papers presented. We expect this to be given broad dissemination by the State Department.

Yours,


William J. Casey

cc: Mr. Leo Cherne

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February 14, 1985

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Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

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Fulfilling my promise to give you some afterthoughts about the Conference --

In preparing for the big get-together, we ought to ask the members of our group to assemble a bibliography on the subject. (Incidentally, I never got the details on the book to which you referred, Dezinformatzia. Who is the author and the publisher?)

The most important aspect of the upcoming conference will be the follow-up. One-shot deals have only a minimal value. It would seem to me that the purpose of the conference should be to lay a groundwork for a permanent Center for Propaganda Research, paralleling the Institute for Propaganda Analysis that did such a good job on Nazi propaganda in the 1930s.

Such a Center should operate on a basis of complete independence, its funding coming from foundations and/or individual citizens. Have you seen the recently published Responsibility & Freedom in the Press, a report of the Citizen's Choice National Commission on Free and Responsible Media? (Their address is 1615 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.) Their conference was set up as a hearing, with "testifiers" and interviews. Its focus was primarily on the issues of media responsibility -- e.g., subjectivity, invasion of privacy, sensationalism, bias, etc. -- and therefore substantially different from our concerns. But I think the people who participated and who contributed -- their names are listed in the published report -- would provide a core of business persons who might want to attend our conference and possibly help in the establishment of a permanent research center.

In my judgment it is not too soon to start thinking about the functions that such a Center could perform. The broad goal of our conference is to establish the urgency of a counter-propaganda program. More specifically, this should lead to discussion of (a) how we can best monitor anti-Western propaganda; and (b) how we can reply and present our own case.

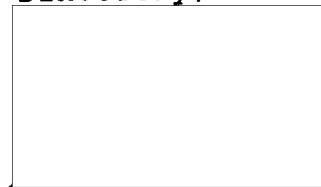
The Center would not only keep tabs on what the opposition is saying but would analyze the themes and the strategies they are putting forward, and how those themes and strategies are

changing with events. Basic patterns would emerge, of course. For example, the Russians never deny; they countercharge. When it is reported that they have invaded Afghanistan, their response is that the Western imperialists had attacked the Afghans. If the world press says the Russians shot down a Korean plane, they charge that the U.S. had sent a spy plane into their territory.

As clearer concepts of Soviet propaganda emerge, it is important that people be educated to understand the techniques. This means that educators must be reached with the information. In addition we must develop a systematic program of reaching the mass audience. The Communists, who have an avowed contempt for "bourgeois morality," have developed an efficient system of subterfuge, using front organizations, fellow traveler networks, and "agit-prop" techniques that seek to create a culture of mutual suspicion in the West while achieving a culture of strict conformity in their own borders. Since democracy is essentially an adversarial system, there will always be people who pick up the refrain; their charges being sensational, they usually get a wide forum in media that depend on sensationalism for their audiences. What we need is a system of information compatible with the values, indeed strengths, of a democratic society -- its openness, its respect for difference of opinion, and its encouragement of a free flow of factual data through unencumbered channels of communication.

I hope these comments are helpful, and I look forward to the next steps. It was a pleasure getting together with you and the others.

Sincerely,



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